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Tomorrow More Important

Dulles Against Splitting Hairs Over Mistakes Of Yesterday

Republicans on both sides of the Capitol, clamoring for an investigation of the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba two years ago, might well take a leaf from the book of their late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

HE HAD A RULE ON OPERATIONS policy which went something like this, though it was never recorded on tape or put down on paper in quotation marks:

Don't bother about the details of what went wrong yesterday. If mistakes were made, learn what you can from them for future guidance. But yesterday's mistakes are part of the situation as it exists today. That's what we have to concentrate on, to decide what we're going to do about it tomorrow. Don't spend too much time looking backward or refighting yesterday's battles. Keep your eyes on what's ahead.

The common sense of this approach might have some moral value in it for the Democrats, too. What stirred up this furor as much as anything else was Atty. Gen Robert E. Kennedy's interview denying there had been any promise of U. S. air support for the Cuban invasion fiasco.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY NOW CONFIRMS no U.S. air cover was planned. If there had been U.S. air cover, says the President, it might as well have been an American invasion.

Sen. Wayne Morse's Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Latin America investigated all this soon after it happened. He has been offering his colleagues a look at his closed hearings record of two years ago, but he has had few takers.

But even if the attorney general had not reopened this old sore, the Cuban controversy might have been revived by New York GOP Sen. Kenneth B. Keating. He insists that Russia is continuing its military build-up on the island, though the missiles and the jet aircraft have been removed.

THE PRESIDENT IN HIS LAST press conference tried to give reassurance that this situation was under constant surveillance. He says that only one Soviet supply ship has arrived in Cuba since the withdrawal of offensive weapons. It may have brought arms. The President also admits that there are still 16,000 to 17,000 Russians in Cuba.

This is of course a legitimate subject for investigation. It is focused on what might happen next, not on past mistakes.

Senator Morse again moved quickly into this situation, calling Secretary of State Dean Rusk and CIA officials to testify in closed hearings. This may head off further washing of dirty American linen in public, but probably not.

To see the Senate or House or both of them in a joint committee investigation of what went on two years ago might be just another exercise in futility.

IT RECALLS THE PEARL HARBOR investigation of 1947 which ran for seven months, and the Senate investigation of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's dismissal by President Truman, which ran for four months in 1951. The latter ended with only a minority report signed by eight Republicans, the majority voting not to issue any formal findings.

There was political motivation in these investigations, just as there is in today's pressure for dredging the mud from the Bay of Pigs once more. It is hard to see how this will contribute anything to getting Castro and communism out of Cuba, which is the major objective ahead.

Political observers also wonder what the Republicans can gain from it. The probe would be all over and forgotten long before the 1964 elections. It is also recalled that former Sen. Homer Capehart, R-Ind., tried to make Cuba the big issue in his campaign for re-election. He was defeated.